

**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing  
Governor's Proposed Budget  
Department of Developmental Services  
February 23, 2017**

My name is Molly Cole and I am the Acting Training Director for the University of Connecticut Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). There are 67 UCEDDs across the country, with at least one center in every US state and territory. This national network of UCEDDs is authorized under Public Law 106-402 (The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 or "DD Act") and their core federal funding is administered by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD). The UConn UCEDD works with people with disabilities, members of their families, state and local government agencies, and community providers in projects that provide training, technical assistance, service, research, and information sharing, with a focus on building the capacity of communities to sustain all their citizens. Our activities are guided by a belief in individualized supports, inclusion, self-determination, natural supports and collaboration with organizations to address critical policy issues and systems change.

I am testifying today regarding Department of Developmental Services Budget.

1. **The Day Services Budget:** The UCEDD Has been doing significant work regarding the Transition of students with disabilities from high school to post-secondary schools, employment or day services. We are very concerned that there is no funding in this budget to address the needs of high school graduates. The UCEDD feels very strongly that individuals and families should not be left waiting for funding as individuals complete their last year of school.
2. **Southbury Training School and the remaining Regional Centers:** While the budget shows some savings from closure of the STS Fire Department and one cottage, the fact remains that STS is a large part of the DDS budget. The UCEDD, along with many of our partner organizations is part of the 2020 committee to close STS by the year 2020 and reinvest those funds into community services and families on the waiting list. At the request of DDDS, in December 2015 this committee submitted a plan to close STS. This detailed plan outlines the research and data on closure of institutions, as well as various labor, community service and training issues that must be addressed to facilitate this closure. We believe that CT should be moving in the direction of closing all institutions as 17 other states have done.
3. **Other concerns relate to the devastating impact of cutting the Family Support Grant, and no funding for behavioral services.** It seems that this budget makes minimal cuts in residential services but took out funding for community services. Connecticut MUST begin to invest in community supports to facilitate the move to community based services. While we

believe that the investment in the ID Partnership is a good beginning, there must be more focus on the community.

**4. Lastly, we oppose the move of the Abuse Investigation Unit to DDS.**

This AID Unit is charged with investigating allegations of abuse of DDS clients. People who risk their own jobs to report abuse need the assurance that the unit can effectively investigate such allegations. How can this unit do so if the allegations are about the very people they are now working with? Further, other allegations of neglect come from family homes. These allegations usually indicate a need for increased services, help or a move to residential for the individual. There are inherent conflicts with waiting lists and budget constraints in reviewing these neglect allegations. As long as DDS is providing direct services this move will be fraught with conflicts. As seen in the experience of DCF, it is very difficult to be both the investigator and the provider of services within the same agency. We recommend Office of Government Accountability or separate office as in Massachusetts (Disabled Persons Protection Commission) as an alternative.

Thank you.

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